

Friday, April 27, 2007

NTSB Testifies On Capitol Hill

Chairman Mark V. Rosenker testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies on the NTSB's work on highway safety issues on April 19, 2007.

The Chairman highlighted the Board's overall role in helping to maintain public confidence in the nation's transportation system by conducting thorough, objective investigations when an accident occurs, and making recommendations to fix the system so similar tragedies will not happen again.

He noted that, in contrast to the other transportation modes, most of the approximately seven million highway accidents each year in the U.S. are investigated at the state and local level.

Chairman Rosenker expressed the hope that "recent developments in technology will help us move beyond crash mitigation and enter a new era where technology will help us prevent accidents from occurring in the first place." He noted that areas where the Board has already made recommendations involving new technologies include:

- The use of electronic on board recorders to increase the compliance of commercial drivers with the hours- of-service regulations;
- Collision warning systems for trucks to help prevent rear-end collisions; and,
- Electronic stability control for passenger vehicles to help drivers maintain control of their cars.

Chairman Rosenker Travels Cross-Country To Address Aviation Safety Issues



***Chairman Rosenker Addresses The Aging Aircraft Conference in Palm Springs, CA.
Photo by Keith Cole.***

Chairman Mark Rosenker spoke at a conference on new developments in airport technology, jointly hosted by the American Association of Airport Executives and the FAA, in Atlantic City, NJ. The Chairman told a gathering of airport executives that prompt action is needed to prevent potentially catastrophic accidents on the nation's runways, and noted that the worst accident in aviation history was a runway collision that cost 583 lives, and that the number of serious runway incursions continues to climb.

He pointed to several recent near-collisions that were avoided only "through flight crew actions sometimes bordering on the heroic - along with a lot of luck. That is not good enough," he said.

Chairman Rosenker acknowledged that delivering effective technological solutions takes time but noted that there are some technologies already available that could help prevent runway incursions. The dangers of incursions are here now, he said, and "the continuing occurrence of hazardous incidents show that we still have work to do."

After speaking in Atlantic City, the Chairman traveled to Palm Springs, California where he delivered the luncheon speech at the Joint Conference on Aging Aircraft.

During his speech he noted that there is no single criterion that defines an aircraft as 'old'. The age of an aircraft depends on a number of factors that include, but are not limited to the chronological age, number of flight cycles, number of flight hours and the environment in which the aircraft operates. Furthermore, determining the overall health of an aircraft is complicated by the fact that individual aircraft components can age differently in different portions of the same aircraft and by the nature of certain aging mechanisms, such as fatigue.

"We have investigated several accidents and incidents that have highlighted the safety implications resulting from aircraft aging and these accidents repeatedly demonstrate the importance of effective airworthiness programs throughout the service life of aircraft," Rosenker said. "With the proper maintenance program, these accidents involving aging aircraft could have been prevented."

Member Hersman Addresses The North Carolina Preschool Transportation Conference and NASDPTS

Member Debbie Hersman was the keynote speaker April 16 to more than 100 representatives of the State of North Carolina's school transportation providers and educators who gathered in Raleigh to discuss preschool transportation issues. She also addressed the members of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) and other transportation directors in the State of North Carolina through a live web cast. Member Hersman presented information on the Safety Board's School Bus Crashworthiness reports and recommendations, as well as the Board's reports and recommendations on the use of vehicles not meeting Federal school bus standards when transporting children to and from school and school-related activities. Stephanie Perkins of SR-30 assisted Member Hersman in preparing her presentations and accompanied Member Hersman to North Carolina.

Board Members Visit MITAGS

Last week several Board Members visited the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) facility and newest full mission simulator in Linthicum, Maryland. Captain Robert Becker escorted the Members through the facility and demonstrated the simulator's capabilities. A demonstration of a transit in and around New York harbor on a 900-foot container ship was undertaken with simulated day/night and restricted visibility conditions. The Members also drove a simulated fast patrol boat through Baltimore's busy harbor to demonstrate many of the scenarios the simulator is capable of, such as oil pollution drills, vessel fires, cruise ship and merchant vessel transits, etc.

Vice Chairman Sumwalt and Member Hersman drive a Coast Guard fast patrol boat through Baltimore Harbor



NTSB Employees Participate In Walter Reed Work Day



As the cold and gray of winter gave way to the warmth and sun of spring, Safety Board volunteers tilled the soil and planted flowers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Fisher House in Washington, DC on Friday April 20th, 2007.

Chairman Rosenker, on behalf of President Bush, presented the Presidential Volunteer Service Award to seven distinguished citizen volunteers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The White House established the USA Freedom Corps initiative to encourage and recognize volunteerism throughout the country. As the backdrop to the event, volunteers from the Board gave of their time and effort in a much appreciated beautification project. Volunteers from the Chairman's office, Member Higgins' office, MD, GC, AS, RE, and PA joined forces to clean up, plant flowers and paint patio furniture at the Army Community Service center and at the Fisher House to make these facilities more attractive for wounded soldiers returning from overseas and their families.

It is with kindness, generosity, and compassion that volunteers throughout the local area freely give of their time, talents, and energy. During National Volunteer Week, the National Transportation

Safety Board celebrated this spirit of service by honoring some of our neighbors who epitomize this spirit.

Safety Board volunteers included Chairman Rosenker, Tom Doyle, He Ning, Gary Halbert, Jim Arena, Ted Lopatkiewicz, Dennis Jones, Scott Dunham, Frank Hilldrup, Carol Horgan, Ellen Muldoon, Rick Minter, and George Sauter.

NTSB 40th Anniversary Celebration

The National Transportation Safety Board hosted a program on April 26, 2007 to recognize its 40th anniversary. Chairman Mark Rosenker summarized some of the Board's most important accomplishments and retired NBC news correspondent Robert Hager lauded the agency's employees for their dedication and tenaciousness in determining the probable cause of accidents. Retired NTSB employee Richard Rodriguez, who was at the Safety Board when it began on April 1, 1967, talked about what it was like to investigate accidents 40 years ago while Erik Grosf, from the Board's Transportation Disaster Assistance Office, discussed how investigators today must work with the FBI, the Transportation Security Administration, and disaster mortuary teams. Numerous dignitaries and former NTSB employees attended the event including, 3 former NTSB Chairmen and 6 former NTSB Board Members. The Board's 40 longest-serving employees were recognized along with the 40 newest employees.



Chairman Rosenker with the 40 longest-service employees